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BIOGRAPHICAL SERIES No. 4.

MRS. ORRELL KEELER MASON,

MISSIONARY TO ASSAM.

Woman's Baptist Foreign Missionary Society,

OF THE WEST.

"EVEN CHRIST PLEASED NOT HIMSELF."—*Paul.*

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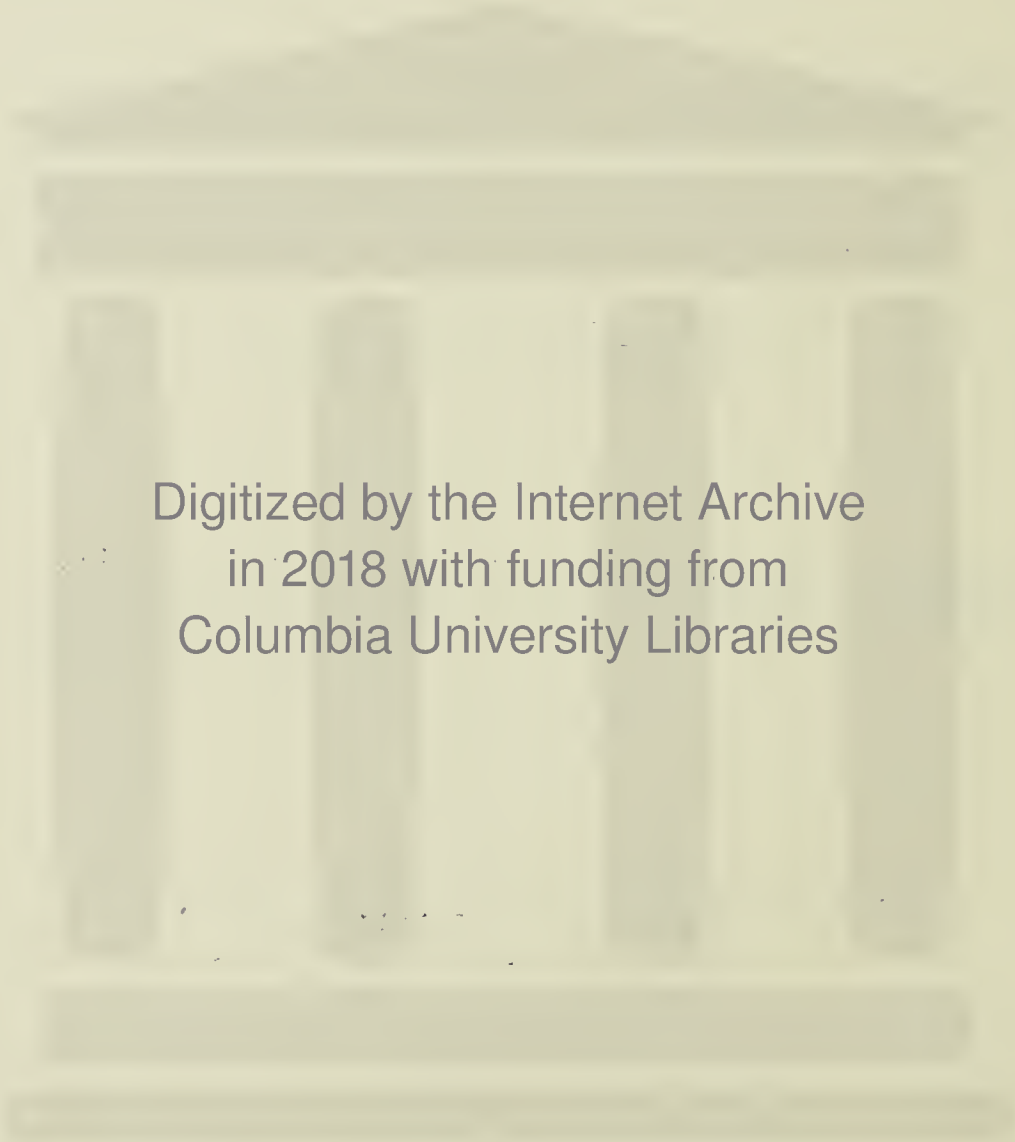
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MRS. ORRELL KEELER MASON,

MISSIONARY TO ASSAM.

A STUDY.

"Even Christ pleased not Himself."—PAUL.

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." In these words our Divine Master embodies the constraining motive for His incarnation, His life of love and mercy, and His cruel death. He has placed before the world, in the record of His earth-history, the most beautiful and only perfect example of self-abnegation. The words of the apostle, quoted above, reveal to us, for our example and inspiration, the secret of the power and beauty of this divine life. *Unselfishness*, inspired by a holy purpose to save and benefit others, lies at the root of all philanthropy, and is pre-eminent in the missionary enterprises of the followers of Christ.

In the four sketches preceding this one of the series, we have seen two of God's sainted ones rounding out long lives of service in varied surroundings, fruitful in well doing and rich in good works. The other two seemed hardly to have begun their labors, when called to their rest above. The Providence that removed them, in the midst of abundant labors

and incompleted plans, seemed mysterious and sad; but in each of these, so different in character and age, we recognize the marks of those who follow the loving and unselfish Christ.

Again is the Society of the West called upon to pen a tribute to one of its faithful and beloved missionaries. Orrell Keeler Mason pre-eminently illustrated throughout her life the spirit of Christly unselfishness, and with rare fidelity and hopefulness, toiled and prayed for the souls under her influence. The steps of this dear sister were providentially led to Assam, where she was permitted to take up much of the work begun by Miss Bronson, and to reap the harvest of her sowing, as she did that of others who preceded her at Nowgong.

Going back to her early life, we find that her birth-place was in Harlem, Delaware Co., Ohio, where she was welcomed by Christian parents into a Christian home. They were members of the Presbyterian Church in Geneva, Ohio, and daily exemplified the principles of the Gospel. There she was early taught that no service or labor was too costly to give to the Lord. The death of her mother, when Orrell was only seven years of age, brought to her the first experience of sorrow, and bereaved her of all that is meant to childhood by the possession and watch-care of mother love. Of this period of her life her sister, Mrs. Mason, a missionary in China, writes:

"Although it has not been my privilege to witness the fruition of the graces of character which appeared in her childhood, yet as the opening bud foreshadows the beauty of the yet unfolded flower, so, in her childhood she manifested those traits of character which afterward developed into the devoted, faithful missionary.

"As I look back to her life in our childhood's home, her

unselfishness, patience, meekness, faithfulness and courage withal, stand out pre-eminently in her character.

"The death of our mother early called forth her sympathies in behalf of others. Her own troubles she bore in silence, like her Master. Her brothers and sisters were always sure of her loving sympathy and help in all their childhood's troubles, and in later years, no one else so nearly filled our mother's place. But while always kind and gentle, she was also firm, and could not be moved from pursuing the course that she believed to be right. Because she was uncomplaining, she was sometimes unjustly treated. What would arouse my indignation she bore with patient meekness. But when danger of any kind came, her courage was equal to the occasion. When we were yet children, how I admired her courage, though not inclined to emulate it. What a heroine she was in my eyes! I well remember one evening when she remained at home to keep house, while the rest of the family were away for evening service. Hearing an unusual sound proceed from the cellar, as if a thief were helping himself to the contents of the pork barrel, Orrell took the lamp and went alone to the cellar to investigate matters; but she found only an unfortunate rat floundering about in the briny deep of a fishless fish barrel. While always kind and pitiful to other creatures, it was seldom that a snake, however large or fierce, survived long after it crossed her path. While I would scamper away, she would boldly face the foe, and generally left a bleeding victim when she turned her back upon it.

"One evening, when returning from our grandfather's, we lost our way in the woods. I was terrified, but Orrell's calmness re-assured me, and it was not until we had reached home

safely that she told me, that she too feared we would be obliged to spend the night in the woods."

We find from this testimony that she had patience, gentleness, and unselfishness, combined with firmness and courage. But a heart preparation and renewing was indispensable to consecrating and perfecting these qualities. What of her spiritual history and development?

Her earliest distinctly serious impressions were received at a prayer meeting, and were probably the culmination and legitimate outgrowth of the influences received in her home. Very early she evinced a thoughtful conscientiousness and a rare sense of obligation. The question with her was always, "*Ought* I to do this?" not do I *wish* to do it? While yet in her childhood she heard a returned missionary speak of the hopeless condition of the heathen, without a knowledge of Christ, having no heaven and immortal life in prospect; and her young heart was deeply moved. She then decided that she would some day go and tell them of Jesus and His love, and from this decision she never wavered. At the age of fourteen she united with the Presbyterian Church. Three years after, death snatched from the family the father who had been so much to them, and the home was broken up. Until this time she had only the educational opportunities afforded her by an ungraded country school, with very little time to study after the daily tasks of the farm house were finished. After her father's death her guardian sent her to an Academy in Central Ohio. She made her home with her teacher, the Rev. Henry Bushnell, whose relatives were engaged in mission work among the South Sea Islanders. The story of their labors deepened her interest in missions, and strengthened her resolve to give her life to work among the heathen.

CHAPTER II.

"Get thy spindle and thy distaff ready, and God shall send thee flax."

This quaint old proverb finds abundant illustration in the histories of those who are fitting themselves for work in God's vineyard, and not less so in the study and teaching carried on by Miss Keeler, which proved directly preparatory to her work as a foreign missionary. Let us trace God's guiding hand in this portion of her life.

From the academy, Orrell entered on her work as teacher in the district school at Galena, Ohio. While here she read "Theodosia Ernest," and began to study the Bible regarding baptism. The result was that she accepted the truth found therein, and was baptized by the Rev. A. Darrow into the Baptist Church at Sunbury, Ohio.

Mrs. G. L. Mason writes fully of the influences which drew her sister to missionary work, and of her experiences during this period, in the following extract:

"All unknown to her most intimate friends, from childhood she cherished the hope of one day being a missionary. Various influences led her to desire this. Our dear father was a missionary in a humble way. Though a busy farmer, he delighted to hold evening services, and to establish Sabbath-schools in destitute neighborhoods. Orrell loved to go with him to these services.

"Our grandparents would insist upon our reading the missionary news on Sundays for entertainment. Perhaps much

of this reading was done because we had to obey and be quiet, and because we preferred reading the missionary magazines rather than doing nothing. But this kind of penance doubtless had its effect in awakening in Orrell an interest in the heathen. Addresses by returned missionaries served to increase this interest. But especially was she encouraged by Elder Darrow and wife, then in charge of the Baptist Church in Sunbury, to give herself to foreign mission work. Had it not been for their loving interest in her, and their encouragment, she herself said that she would hardly have had the courage to have offered herself to the Board. Had she not been in Granville when the call came for two single lady missionaries, the time of her going might have been deferred.

It was her loving devotion to her brothers and sisters, at that time attending school in Granville, that took her there, seemingly at the sacrifice of her own personal interests. But God made this visit a stepping-stone to the attainment of her long cherished desire.

Previous to this visit and her application to the Board, she entered the Normal School at Lebanon, Ohio, with a view to better preparation for teaching.

Of her school life in Lebanon one of her class-mates, Mrs. S. M. Burgess, thus writes:

"When I attended the National Normal School at Lebanon, one of my most valued friends was my room-mate and class-mate, Miss Orrell Keeler. By both teachers and school-mates she was highly esteemed for her earnest, devoted, Christian example. In the noon prayer meeting her influence was the means of leading some of her class to Christ. She will be remembered in the Baptist Church and Sunday-school at Leba-

non as an enthusiastic and industrious worker. After a week of hard work as a close student, Sunday morning always found her before her Sunday-school class, her face beaming with interest in the blessed truths she was teaching. She was very conscientious, and the only fault I ever heard any one find with her was for gently reproving some rude girls for misconduct. They said she was "too strict." But it was her careful, strict habits that made her teachers trust her, and that so grandly prepared her for the work of the years that lay before her. Her devotion and her perseverance in Christian duty were unfailing. How hallowed has been the influence of her prayers! All the time she was in school she felt that her life was to be set apart for special work for her Master. After her graduation from the Normal, she taught successfully in Ohio and Indiana. Not only was she faithful as a teacher, but she continually sought to reach a higher life for herself and to lead those about her to the Savior whom she loved so well. And to-day many who were her school-mates or pupils remember her, because by associating with her their lives were made purer, better and happier."

As has been before intimated, she was at Granville visiting relatives, when the call of our Woman's Board for seven young women to go out as missionaries, came to her listening ears. She received encouragement and sympathy from her friends, and applied for an appointment to fill one of the vacant places. In July, 1875, she and Miss Anna Sweet were accepted and appointed to Assam. During the busy weeks which followed, Miss Keeler found time to visit many churches, and awakened their zeal and interest in foreign missions, especially for the work among heathen women. Of her experi-

ences at this time we will let her loving sister, Mrs. Mason, again speak to us:

"Although long before this she had given herself to her Savior, yet after her appointment she spoke of realizing, as never before, that she was not her own, and rejoiced in the fact, and she said she felt, too, that God's people especially were her kindred. A few days before leaving for India we were together at the house of a friend. While there a pious old colored man called to see her, and expressed his joy that she was going to tell the heathen about Jesus, and praised and blessed the Lord that she was willing to go. The whole-souled blessing of this old man was like a benediction and did her much good. After he left she said she rejoiced to claim that man as her brother. And it was a great surprise and sorrow that all Christians did not feel the same. Other professed Christians spoke of her going as a "wild goose chase," and as "sacrificing herself," and like expressions, which, while they by no means made her sorry she had chosen the life of a missionary, yet made her very sad and anxious about the spiritual condition of those who cared so little for the heathen as to speak thus."

The farewell services of these dear young sisters were held in Granville, in September, 1875, and on the 18th of the same month they left New York on the Steamer Utopia. The feelings with which Miss Keeler set forth are told best in her own words.

From London she wrote back, just before setting sail for India, "To-morrow we sail! We are anxious to be on our way to begin preparations for our work. I trust I may have grace and strength to do much for the Master. I have been

very happy since I left home, because I feel assured that I am just where the Lord would have me to be, and I rejoice that I am counted worthy to endure trial for Christ's sake. I would not retrace one step."

Thus have we seen the spindle and distaff prepared; have seen the King's daughter with loving heart and waiting hands looking up to Him who awakened the desire for His service. He has placed the flax in her hands, and she has gone forth with it to distant lands, to spin and weave her life's web, according to the pattern shown her in God's word. How earnest and faithful she was in the fulfillment of her task we shall see.

CHAPTER III.

"To begin a reform, go not into the places of the great and rich; go rather to those whose cups of happiness are empty—to the poor and humble. And then I laid a plan and devoted my life."—LEW WALLACE.

An ocean voyage has ceased to be a rarity. The earliest missionaries embarked in ordinary and oftentimes uncomfortable merchant vessels. Six months voyaging around the cape, with complete isolation from the outside world, the travellers often being destitute of many comforts and in dire peril, formed a trying feature of their initiatory experience. Nor was this all. Dr. Bronson tells us of two months more of terrible journeying from Calcutta to Sadiya, Assam, in native boats, against a rapid current, with numberless discomforts, while himself and fellow passengers were at the mercy of a native crew whose language they did not understand.

Far different is the experience of the travellers of to-day. Misses Keeler and Sweet embarked on the Utopia, Sept. 18, 1875, for England, whence they again took a steamer to Calcutta, which they reached in about five weeks. Their voyage was prosperous and pleasant, and afforded them the rest and invigoration they so much needed. Instead of rude native boats another steamer bore them rapidly and safely to their stations in Assam, that lovely valley nestling among its surrounding hills, beyond which the snow-capped Himalayas tower heavenward. From their heights the noble Brahmaputra descends to beautify and make fruitful the country

through which it passes to the sea. They were warmly welcomed by the missionaries. Miss Keeler joined Dr. and Mrs. Bronson at Gowahati, while Miss Sweet went to Mr. and Mrs. Neighbor at Nowgong. There they began that labor which became surpassingly dear to them, "work for the blessed Master among the women of Assam."

Bravely and cheerfully had Miss Keeler's loving heart endured the hurried preparations and passed through the ordeal of parting from friends and kindred. But turning from all these she writes from her first home in a strange land as follows:

"I am thankful that the Lord ever turned my heart towards the perishing heathen, and I rejoice that I am in India to-day, instead of being in my own native land." Having "laid a plan" and "devoted her life," with her there never was any looking back or withdrawal of her consecration.

About the close of 1877 she received injuries by a fall from her pony which for nearly six months rendered her unfit for study or work. It was feared she might be obliged to return to America. At this time she wrote, "It seems infinitely harder to return to America so soon, without having accomplished anything for these poor people, than it was to leave the home land."

But this trial was spared her. By the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Neighbor from Nowgong, Miss Sweet was left alone, and by Dr. and Mrs. Bronson's advice, Miss Keeler decided to join her, and try the effect of a change of residence. Here she was most warmly welcomed, and soon began to improve rapidly in health, so that before long she was able to resume work. But still another change awaited her. Miss Sweet

began to fail in health, so that in a few months, on the one so lately almost a helpless invalid, rested the whole care and responsibility of the mission. But her God was her helper, and never was the promise "and as thy days are, so shall thy strength be," more fully verified than in her case. Her health and strength were restored, and when Miss Sweet was finally forced to go away for medical treatment, she went bravely on, with the aid of her native helpers caring for all the interests of the mission, superintending the schools, prescribing for the sick, training the Bible-women, looking after the household affairs, visiting the Zenanas as she found time for it, counseling, advising and reproving the native Christians, settling their family quarrels and church difficulties, keeping the accounts of all money matters connected with the mission station, acting as secretary of the Government schools, and withal being obliged to depend entirely upon her own judgment and resources in managing all these affairs, a responsibility that taxed to the utmost all her mental and physical energies.

In writing to the Board she says, "The work came to me unsought, and I have taken it up with many fears, but the path has been a plain one. I could not do otherwise than go forward. The Nowgong mission is struggling for life and pleading for stronger arms to sustain it. Without a missionary in charge the two grant-in-aid schools would be closed, and twelve Christian teachers be thrown out of employment, the Normal school would be shut up, and our Mikir boys, who are to be teachers and preachers to their tribes, would be sent away. Our woman's work, too, would suffer, and the Zenanas which have been so promising would be neglected. Oh, for power to sound out the Macedonian cry! Are there none

to come to the rescue of Assam?" But in January, 1880, she was cheered by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Moore, and she was soon relieved of the care of the station, and gave herself with renewed zeal to her own specific work in the girls' schools and in the Zenanas. But the imperative needs of the work called forth the pathetic appeal to our Board: "I hope you will plead for another young lady for Nowgong. Is there not some one among God's chosen ones to come over and help us?"

In November, 1881, her desires were gratified, and Miss Anna K. Brandt came to her aid, full of zeal and earnestness. She was also greatly encouraged by hopeful indications in her school work. Two of her brightest pupils were baptized, and another was married to one of the most promising native preachers, and set out with her husband to labor in the Naga Hills, the first foreign missionaries sent out from the little church at Nowgong. Another gratifying fact was that one of her girls had successfully passed a Government examination, and as this was the first time a girl had appeared at these examinations, her school had the honor of taking the lead in female education. In Miss Keeler's report for 1886 she states that four girls from her school had passed the Government examinations, and one who had passed the primary examination the preceding year had been sent to Calcutta to take a medical course of study under the Lady Dufferin Fund. This is the first step Assam has taken towards educating women as physicians. But the long continued strain upon Miss Keeler's energies had left serious results, and it became evident that she must have a season of rest or break down utterly. In May, 1882, she writes, "I do not know how much longer I can re-

main in Assam before a change will be necessary, but I hope to be able to stay two or three years. The thought of leaving this dear people whom I love so well, even for a short time, is painful to me. I feel that I cannot go, unless it is an imperative necessity. So many have already gone, others are not well, and altogether, the future of Assam looks dark. We are praying that more help may be sent soon, and that those now on the field may have strength to stay on." In addition to the station work, we find her about this time opening a school for girls in a Hindu temple, thus "carrying the war into the enemy's camp," and taking a step towards aggressive movements.

The secret of her persistent labor appears in the following extract from a letter written at this time:

"I am constrained to acknowledge the goodness of our Heavenly Father in His care for us, in that He has begotten in our hearts such love and pity for this people that toil becomes a loving service. In missions as in all other work difficulties will be met, but we can bear testimony to His glory that, of all the good things which He has promised, not one has failed!"

Under the inspiration of such faith and such assurance, we cannot wonder that in working out her "plan," even during the lonely sojourn in Nowgong, we find her exhibiting a courageous perseverence amid great discouragements.

The next year there remained no question as to the necessity of her return, and in March, 1883, she committed her work to Mrs. Moore, and started homeward, reaching this country early in June. Thus, after eight years of faithful, devoted service among those whose cups she found to be indeed "empty

of happiness," she returned to greet old friends and enjoy Christian society, and seek the needed rest and health. The exceeding frailness of her appearance, and the extreme prostration of her nervous system, shocked all who knew her. But it was the body alone which had yielded under the long continued strain during the life in Assam. The soul within its frail tenement looked forth brave and hopeful as of old.

During the eight years of her absence, many changes had taken place among her family friends. Great was her joy in finding her brothers and sisters—students when she left—now active workers in the church and occupying responsible positions in society. Mrs. Mason had already followed her example, and was laboring with her husband in Hang-chow, China, while another sister had married the pastor of a Baptist Church in Ohio. In her companionship she found sweet and precious fellowship, which added much to the enjoyment of her stay in this country.

Soon after her arrival she placed herself under medical care in a sanitarium in Cleveland, Ohio. Mrs. A. K. Scott, who had spent some years in Nowgong before Miss Keeler went there, was connected with the institution and saw much of her. She has written of her as she was at this time, and says:

"Though feeble in health and under medical care the greater part of the time, she was ever on the alert to enlist every one in sympathy and effort for her beloved Assamese, and her strong faith in her Savior was to all an inspiration to a higher and more active Christian service. She was ever truly loyal to the noble band of women who formed the Board of the Society of the West. Their prayers and their wise counsels had been of much value to her during all her missionary life,

that she would not undertake to carry out any plans nor inaugurate any measure without their approval."

As her health improved and strength returned, she felt a strong desire to awaken an interest in others kindred to her own in the condition and needs of the Assamese. Like the Hindu among the Wise Men in Ben Hur, the misery of the heathen strengthened her love. Like him she could not rest, nor sought to plead weakness as an excuse for inactivity. She proved it true that "the happiness of love is in action, its test is what one is willing to do for others." As soon as it was deemed safe, she met in Christian gatherings those who asked her of her work and its results. Often was her gentle voice heard in many of our churches during the latter part of her stay. With quiet dignity, but great earnestness, she pressed home the needs of the Assamese and our obligation to meet them with the Gospel. It was a matter of great thankfulness to her when she was pronounced sufficiently restored to return, and she joyfully began preparations for her journey. Looking forward to this step with mingled emotions she might well have said:

"I do not yet understand myself. The most I am sure of is that I am doing the Master's will, and that the service is a constant ecstacy. When I think of the purpose I am sent to fulfill, there is in me a joy so inexpressible that I know the will is God's."

CHAPTER IV.

"I settled my faith into the keeping of patience, and took to waiting."—Lew Wallace.

The Assam mission is the second of those established by the American Baptist Missionary Union. Much interest had at that early period been awakened by an account of the Shans brought to the notice of missionaries by British officials. Dr. Nathan Brown and Mr. O. T. Cutter went from Burma in 1835 to establish a mission among them. It was supposed that they could be most easily reached by locating first among the Khamties of Upper Assam, who were supposed to be, properly speaking, emigrant Shans. Later, Revs. Miles Bronson and Jacob Thomas and their wives were sent to the infant mission. The latter crossed the ocean and underwent the perils of the Brahmaputra at the heights of the rains, only to catch sight of the trees of the mission station and then enter the rest above, before labor on heathen soil was begun. The Khamti war forced the abandonment of the Upper stations. The missionaries, reinforced by Rev. Cyrus Barker and wife, opened the present prominent stations of Sibsaugor, Gauhati, and Nowgong. Dr. Bronson reluctantly abandoned the interesting mission among the Angami Nagas, where he had buried his only sister, Miss Rhoda Bronson, who accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Barker to Assam. The fever which took her so early from her work attacked her brother, and the only safety for him and his family was to seek the plains. This experience led to his location in Nowgong, where the most of his

forty years of service were spent. The missionaries began work afresh among the Assamese, consisting of both Hindus and Mohammedans, the neighboring Hill Tribes being largely spirit worshippers.

The Assam mission has been prosecuted with varying success. Precious souls have been saved, churches founded, schools established, the New Testament and portions of the Old have been given to the people in their own tongue, and believers have died in the triumphs of faith. God has honored and blessed the labors of His servants, though He has seen fit to try their faith, lo, these many years. It is a field having much to discourage, and where many obstacles have to be overcome. The hard soil of Brahminism has long resisted the ploughshare of the Gospel. The necrology of the mission embraces the names of many noble men and women. Abundant in labors, they laid choice sacrifices upon the altar, and toiled with rare diligence and fidelity, till called, sooner or later, to their reward. Their prayers for the Assamese are before the throne. Their tears often watered their seed sowing. "These all died in faith," assured of the final redemption of the country from the thraldom of heathenism, and this faith was based on nothing less than the promises of God.

Of late years the force of missionaries has been small, and they have been barely able to hold the stations, without attempting aggressive work. Thus it has been true of this mission that the laborers had much of trial, and their faith has indeed "settled into the keeping of patience," and "taken to waiting." Fully aware of these discouraging facts, Miss Keeler did not shrink from returning to join the faithful few in that distant land, nor to take up the burden she had so reluc-

tantly laid down. Having spent some months in the study of medicine while at home, and furnished through the kindness of friends with a good supply of remedies, she felt better fitted to cope with and relieve the physical misery with which she would soon be surrounded.

Feeling the need of a helper and of companionship in her work, she greatly rejoiced at the application of Miss Nettie Purssell to be sent out with her. She was appointed her associate and they proved congenial spirits. A rare and beautiful friendship at once sprang up between them. In September, 1885, Miss Keeler sailed again for Assam, this time accompanied by Miss Purssell. They reached Nowgong, Dec. 1st, and were welcomed with great joy by missionaries and church members and school children, as well as by Hindus and Mohammedans and those of the Hill Tribes then in the station.

Thus, they two—the elder tried and proved, the younger enthusiastic and inexperienced—began work together. They found sad changes among the native helpers. Some of the most efficient had died, others were disabled, and few seemed fitted to fill the vacant places. But in spite of these discouragements Miss Keeler cheerfully took up her work again, leaning upon God, and stimulated by her bright cheery young helper. The last year of her labors was filled with the regular routine of mission work, varied by some jungle trips with encouraging results. Her health had been unusually good, and her letters breathed a spirit of hopeful courage.

As Orrell Keeler stood on the threshold of 1887, did no whisperings of the changes so soon awaiting her visit her spirit in its quiet hours? Was not some loving token given her, as to Bunyan's Christiana, that she soon should be doubly

crowned—crowned with a husband's love, and the crown of victory God gives his beloved? That she should have, not only earth's best gift—a loving heart all her own—but she should be admitted into the presence of her Heavenly Bridegroom forever? We know not—but we do know that for all this she was well prepared.

"Oh, restful, blissful ignorance!
'Tis blessed not to know;
It stills me in those mighty arms
Which will not let me go,
And hushes my soul to rest
On the bosom which loves me so.

"So I go on—not knowing;
I would not, if I might;
I would rather walk in the dark with God,
Than go alone in the light.
I would rather walk with him by faith,
Than walk alone by sight."

With the opening of 1887 a change in her condition was apparent. She complained of great physical weakness and nervous prostration. She would not acknowledge she was ill, and continued her labors till April. It became evident her strength was failing. Loss of appetite, sleeplessness, depression of spirits and great nervous exhaustion, filled the hearts of her associates with anxiety and alarm. Her devoted friend, Miss Purssell, watched over her with the tenderest assiduity, gradually taking one task after another upon herself, hoping by thus relieving Miss Keeler of care and labor, to avert the dreaded alternative of a return to America. During the Assamese Jubilee at Nowgong, in December, she received a

proposal of marriage from Rev. M. C. Mason, missionary to the Garos, in Assam. She warmly reciprocated the love thus proffered her. The marriage met the most cordial approbation of all the missionaries. All who knew them believed them to be eminently adapted to each other, and that such a union would be mutually helpful, and enhance the efficiency of both in their chosen work. Those who knew her and understood her pure, sweet, loving nature, rejoiced that her beautiful life was to be crowned with this dearest earthly joy. Her friends all fondly hoped that change of scene, surroundings and associations, would prove beneficial to her health, and that years of happiness and increased usefulness were to be hers in the new home awaiting her. Miss Keeler was ardently attached to her missionary associates and loyal always in her friendships. Her loving words of appreciation show how hard it was for her to part with themand her dear people in Assam, to enter on a new work in Tura.

For change and rest she went to Calcutta, accompanied by her beloved Miss Purssell. Here Mr. Mason joined them, and their marriage was solemnized at Lall Bazaar Chapel, April 27. The next day she and her husband set out for Tura, which they reached May 4th, where she was warmly welcomed by the missionaries and native Christians, who hoped much from her coming. The following evening, though weak and weary, she attended and greatly enjoyed the weekly prayer meeting. Little did those gathered with her that evening think that with the morrow alarming symptoms were to develope, which would soon remove her from the new home she had only just entered. But such proved to be the will of the Master. Ten anxious days and nights, loving, sympathe-

tic friends ministered to her. They could not keep her with them, and as the Sabbath morning dawned, the weary spirit rested in the bosom of God.

Wallace says, "The good man, like the bad must die," but remembering the lesson of our faith, we say of him and the event, "No matter, he will open his eyes in heaven." To enter upon this glorious awakening, Mrs. Mason slept in Jesus. Miss Purssell writes, regarding this mysterious providence:

"Five weeks ago to-day Mrs. Orrell Keeler Mason, who seemed a part of our very being, was laid to rest on the hillside in Tura. Never was any matter made the subject of more earnest, conscientious prayer than her going to Tura; never was greater desire to do just the right thing, to follow the leading of the Spirit, than was in her heart. That the Lord should direct her in that way, permit her to go, and then, when she had scarcely reached her home, take her from us, seems a mysterious providence. These have been days of darkness, of doubting and questioning. That she, who had so won the hearts of these people, who was so peculiarly fitted for missionary work, was so much needed in Assam, and so necessary to us who loved her, should be so suddenly taken from her work, seems very strange to our short-sightedness. We have felt that 'to be denied the privilege of pouring forth our love and lamentations over the grave of one who, in life, was our happiness, is to shut up the soul of the survivor in a solitary tomb, where the bereaved heart pines in secret till it breaks with the fullness of uncommunicated sorrow.'

"Here in Nowgong, Christian and heathen alike have mourned their loss. Educated baboo and street beggar have expressed the same love for her who was so well known as

their friend. The Zenana women want to talk of her all the time. To the Society of the West, to the work in Assam, to our home and to our hearts, the loss is irreparable.

"In 1883, when it was thought that she must go home, she wrote in a little diary which we find among her papers, 'I feel that I cannot go to America and leave these people.' At another time, when visiting missionaries were here at an ordination, she wrote, 'How many, many times I have sat alone among these native Christians. Now the Lord has permitted me to see six missionaries here, all interested in the people I *love*—the *Assamese*.' She did love them as her life, and suffered for them as few people are capable of suffering. Never sparing herself, she literally gave her soul and body to this work. The love and sympathy which were manifested by her every look, word and act, won all hearts to her. To relieve and soothe the weary, aching body, to comfort the sorrowing heart, brought joy to her own loving heart, and she never was more beautiful than when engaged in her daily ministrations among these degraded people. She left to us, as a precious legacy, this, her unfinished work, as she called it; and as it is impossible to go about the house without seeing her finger-marks and feeling that we see or hear her, so it is impossible to go among these people and not feel her influence.

"She but entered the door of the waiting home in Tura, and was gone ere the Garo people realized what they had lost. But while the Kullung river washes these sand banks of Assam, the influence of Orrell Keeler Mason will be felt in Nowgong and the surrounding country.

"She had translated Moody's "Prevailing Prayer" into Assamese, hoping soon to revise and publish it.

"Heaven has gained an angel, but we hope she will be a 'ministering spirit' to the many friends so sorely bereaved."

Mr. Mason pays her the following beautiful tribute:

"Her love and devotion was pure, rich, and deep. Her whole soul was in her work for her Savior, and her whole heart ached for sinners out of Christ. Her love and sympathy touched those hard Hindu hearts, as few have the power of doing. It was a blessing to have a share in that love, though but for a day. But, oh! what hopes are blasted! when I had thought this blessing mine, for daily help in the perplexities of my work, for a constant aid in the conquering of my daily faults, and for an hourly tonic to a nobler, truer Christian life. These past four days I have been struggling with all my might to get upon my feet. The blow is so severe. I am benumbed. I lift up my head and think I can rise, but, oh! how weak! I stretch forth my hand to work, but it serves me so feebly. May the God of mercies hear the prayers of this day, and help me to feel the Father's arms sustaining me, and enable me to do better service, and make greater efforts for these poor souls to whom so few have come to tell of a Savior's love."

In a later letter he says:

"I regarded her as one among a thousand. The unselfish, Christlike kindness which flowed easily, and, as it appeared naturally from her daily life, was a characteristic of her work. She plead with the powers of love, both with the heathen, and for harmony and united work with the Christians. She found much to discourage, for sin has full sway among this people. 'They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy,' is the faithful promise which I have had inscribed upon her tombstone."

Thus, suddenly, in the midst of harvests waiting to be garnered, desert places needing to be sowed with the Gospel seed, with new paths and fresh joys opening before her, our sister was taken to rest forever in her Father's home above.

In closing this study of a lovely, consecrated Christian life, we cannot do better than to append a loving tribute from her associate and friend. It is earnestly hoped that the perusal of this sketch may lead some to follow in the steps and emulate the spirit of the departed. Also that new interest may be awakened in the Assam mission, resulting in prompt re-inforcement and vigorous prosecution of work among the Assamese, whom so many sainted ones have loved, and for whom they have devoted their labors. Others labored, but we may enter into their labors.

A TRIBUTE

TO

HER FRIEND AND FELLOW WORKER.

BY MISS NETTIE PURSSELL.

"No life can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife, and all life not be purer and stronger thereby."

Mrs. Orrell Keeler Mason's life was one singularly pure in its purpose. A two-fold purpose: To be like Jesus, and to win others to Him.

Everywhere, under the most trying circumstances, there were the same sweetness, gentleness, and patience. I have seen perfect strangers tell her their heart sorrows because the spirit of love and sympathy was manifested in her expression and manner to such a degree that they instinctively knew her to be their friend.

In travelling with her, again and again, persons have spoken to me about the manifest loveliness of her character. Shrinking from publicity, naturally dependent and clinging in disposition, she never hesitated or shrank when duty called or when she could help another, even if it meant to brave danger single-handed or to meet death face to face. In the fullest sense she lived for others and spared not herself. In all the little things which go to make up our lives and to photograph our characters upon those about us, there was in hers nothing to mar the beauty and loveliness of the picture.

She was so Christlike and lived so near to the Father, that it was often with feelings of the deepest reverence that I touched her. The world is better because she lived; there are many who will say—because of her life I am saved; those who knew her most intimately have higher and holier aspirations because of her influence.

Of the daily and most confidential companionship of one year and nearly eight months, I have only the most sacred recollections. And the love which began with the first clasp of the hand and deepened to the end of her life, is only strengthened by the separation, until it shall be renewed in eternity.

CHICAGO, AUG. 31ST, 1888.

I thankfully acknowledge the aid received in the writing of this sketch from a manuscript sketch of Mrs. Mason prepared by Mrs. A. K. Scott, and from an article printed in the Journal and Messenger, by Mrs. Shephardson, about the time the news of her death was received.

MRS. C. F. TOLMAN.

THE HINDU MAIDEN.

BY ORRELL KEELER.

THINK not ye favored ones of Christian lands that the one God like element in human nature is your gift alone. Nay. It lies embosomed in the hearts of the ignorant heathen, and ever and anon displays itself in acts of heroic devotion. The story I am about to relate is no fiction; with the facts and individuals I am personally acquainted.

In the Province of Assam is a small village which I shall call "Bel-Tola." Here lived two high caste Hindu families. According to Hindu custom, the youngest daughter of one family, whom I shall call "Kamini," was betrothed in childhood to "Gopal," an idolized son of the other family. While children they played together and their interest in each other ripened into affection.

The usual betrothal ceremonies had taken place, but the nuptial day had been delayed beyond the usual time. Kamini remaining secluded in her father's house, not permitted to see Gopal, was joyfully looking forward to the time when she should become his bride. A few years passed in happy, hopeful expectation to Kamini, but they were working mighty changes in the mind of Gopal. He had met a Christian teacher in his boyhood and from him he had received a little tract. A few simple truths had taken deep root in his heart, these had developed a spirit of inquiry, and inquiry had grown to conviction. He resolved, come weal or woe, to obey his conscience and his God. He sought his teacher, unburdened his heart, and shortly afterward was seen proclaiming his faith in Christ by baptism. The news spread and the dreadful tidings reached Kamini's ears. *Gopal was a Christian.* She spent weary days and nights in bitter tears. To her he was worse than dead. Soon her father sickened and died. She felt that all was dark, that her life was desolate. Her beloved father's voice was silent and her betrothed had forsaken not only her but his own family and friends for a new and strange religion. She refused to

be comforted. At last her mother and friends said she must be married to another more worthy than Gopal. They made choice of one more learned and were careful to ascertain that he was true to his caste and his religion. She begged of them not to marry her to one whom she knew not, nor cared to know, and said, "Let me share the widow's fate and ever mourn the loss of him whom alone I love." But they heeded not her entreaties. At an early date the wedding day was appointed and they hastened the preparations.

In the meantime Gopal was happy in the joy of a Christian's first love, though oftentimes a sadness entered his heart at the remembrance of his broken family ties, at the remembrance of his dearly beloved Kamini only his faith and courage faltered. He had found peace in his soul and he knew that his name was written above, but could he lay the idol of his heart upon the altar? Through grace he was enabled at length to say, "Yes, Lord, *all* for Thee." Faith triumphed. He resolved henceforth to cast his lot with the despised Christians. A few months passed. Gopal being weary with his loneliness and unaccustomed to providing for his temporal wants, decided to take a Christian wife. He chose one whose name was Lilawote. He made known to her his intentions and on receiving his proposition she coquettishly delayed her answer. At last he insisted on a definite answer and gave her a definite time in which to decide. But no reply came.

In the meantime, Kamini remaining in thoughtful seclusion, tenderly cherished memories of the past. The rigid rules of her religion became became more and more distasteful to her. Her anger toward Gopal had changed to sympathy and admiration of his heroism, and as she examined her own heart she knew that she loved him more than ever. But what a barrier lay between them. *Caste and Christianity.* The time was rapidly approaching when she was to marry the Hindu scholar. The thought brought only sadness to her heart. At length affection triumphed and she said, "Why should I forsake the one chosen for me in childhood by my departed father?" Gopal is already my betrothed husband, and though he is an outcaste, let his condition be my condition." So, like Ruth of old, she turned from her home and friends and started for the Christian village where Gopal had found a home. True love, never wanting in means of

communication, had whispered to Gopal of Kamini's fidelity. Overwhelmed with joy he lifted his tearful eyes to Heaven in grateful prayer that God had given back to him his beloved Kamini. Immediately he secured a place for her in a Christian family and set out to escort her to the village. Her arrival created a stir in the quiet Christian village. Some wondered at, some admired her fortitude, while the heathen sneered at her strange decision.

With none did her arrival excite greater interest than with Lilawote. Now she was ready to give an answer. She quickly announced to Gopal that she was and had been both willing and intending to marry him. Again he sought his Christian teachers. They heard his story, examined the case and decided that he would be justified in marrying Kamini—that Lilawote deserved to reap the fruit of her own folly.

Once more Gopal's sorrow was turned to rejoicing, but not so with Lilawote. Gopal hastily prepared a house and when all was ready the happy two were made one.

And now in a simple native hut you will find two happy, contented hearts, verifying Kamini's own words, "If our minds are happy we want nothing." Kamini was taught from her childhood to observe the customs of Hinduism and to despise Christianity as an unclean, heinous thing. She now renounces all and desires to learn and obey the teachings of Christianity, God grant that many others may have the fortitude to break the fetters of sin and idolatry and come out into the glorious light and liberty with which Christ has made His people free.

July 20, 1878.